# caught in the act

### THOMPSON TWINS/TALISMAN/ELECTRIC GUITARS
### Heaven, London

WHAT safer bet, when your style's slipped and there's some serious fadding to catch up on, than adopting an opportunist "rock" band?

And what better way, if the decade's first flurry of fashion – boys in headbands and skirts, girls in bandanas and britches – at first seemed a bit too barmy to stomach, than to go for one sharp enough to cotton on so acutely and mimic so accurately?

The Heavenly Thompson Twins set the straight seal of approval on consumer exotica; their miraculous transformation from Talking Heads soundalikes to something more like Stimulum in a relatively small matter of months is a sober acknowledgement of the choice, in these desperate days of decline, between acquiescence and extinction. Go with the flow or just go ... bye bye.

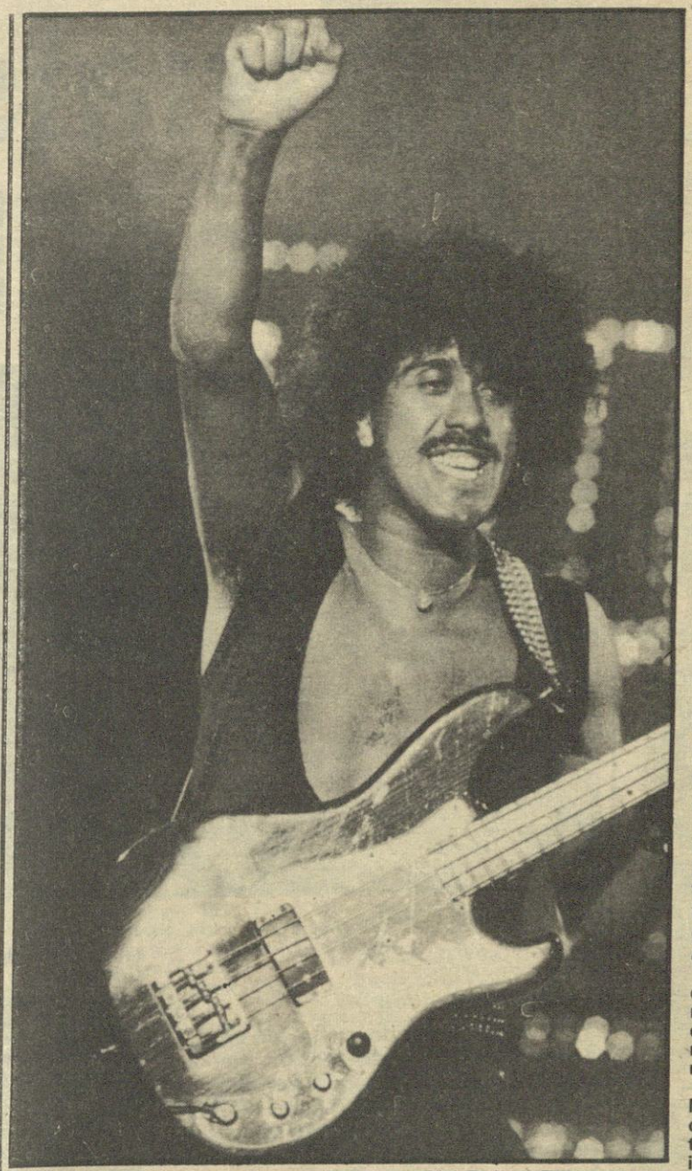
And what if the Thompsons' imitations do weigh in as the sincerest form of Ant flattery? At least it's an unashamed relief from the Electric Guitars' more nervous and ill-fitting jungle adoption.

As plagiarist as Positive Noise and just as proud of it, the Twins' front never essentially falters, never once is their surrender to shop-proven style anything less than functional fun.

They realise their only strength's their visual versatility and sensibly flaunt it for all it's worth – never mind the quality, feel the width of these influences: Burundi to Bowie, Stig Of The Dump to Spandau Ballet – on the case or on the case?

Talisman are tastier in this swamp of sweat, turning more heads, tapping more toes. So UB40 should sue . . . so what? "Dole Age" is a delightfully seductive single, they set the whole place dancing and their political party-down seems to be temptingly timely without even trying.

When it comes down to it, honesty will out: Talisman practise what they preach but



PHIL LYNOTT . . . firmly tongue in cheek. Pic: Robert Ellis

# In the land of rain and cozzers

### Q-TIPS/JUDIE TZUKE/IAN HUNTER/THIN LIZZY
### Milton Keynes Bowl

**A modern outdoor festival in a new town with its own purpose-built mudbath. No nasty Hells Angels security, bad acid or three-day tepees. Instead young, polite(!) policeman ushered cars and damp rockers down neat gravel tracks to a grass stadium defined by harsh lights and more silhouetted cozzers circling the top of the artificial terrace like uniformed Apaches.**

Yes, Milton Keynes – the kind of place where a man (and his family) can start afresh, where the streets are clean and the bobbies roam, where the jobs grow on trees and everybody has a home.

Into the valley of plenty I rode (well, drove), losing my way in the tangled mesh of vernal roundabouts and cluttered signposts, thus missing the mysterious Trimmer and Jenkins, but not the infamous Q-Tips.

If recycled soul has its place, then Milton Keynes must be it. Operating on the unique conceptions shared by town planners, the Tips foist inadequate ideas on a captive audience under the guise of this year's thing and authentic pleasure, limply surviving on the fortunate (for some) maxim that some people wouldn't know a pile of shit from goldust.

To underline the fact that this was a decidedly Eighties affair, the weather contrived to be most contemporary, dousing the paltry crowd of around 4,000 – last year's bash with The Police pulled 25,000 – in a cold stream of miserable grey drizzle. Ah, the pleasures of the British countryside in the raw!

A plethora of beer guts and dodgy tour jackets made the backstage compound resemble a roadies' convention – which it probably was anyway – and it was there, in the drinks tent, that Judie Tzuke could be best appreciated. Dedication or sheer stupidity meant that I watched her highly professional set and only knowing her one hit, "Stay With Me Till Dawn", was surprised to discover that London's answer to Stevie Nicks has dipped into heavy metal.

Playing the conventional rhythms of the genre her accomplished band thundered blandly on as Judy, dressed in black lace, hammered a variety of props which she changed more frequently than her repetitive vocal inflections. Some wah! over the rainbow my mind drifted away.

Anyone who continually writes songs around the vagaries of rock 'n' roll must come under suspicion. Ian Hunter has made this vital art form his personal obsession, extending the self-regarding investigation into his current material.

Using a gang of old American rockers who powered along with the pace of a one-legged wallaby, he did nothing to suggest that imminent revival is around the corner. As he says himself "there are some noises that shouldn't be heard".

For the record, he ripped off his two hits, "All The Young Dudes" and "All The Way To Memphis", and announced he would not do an interview with MM. How we cried.

At last the welcome shroud of darkness fell over the bleak site and Thin Lizzy made their entrance. Like raiders of the lost ark, they brought the day's only flash of excitement and the realisation that their brand of escapist hard rock populated by cowboys, lovers and streetfighters is tailor made for today's vogue adventurism.

Through a magnificent sound system they pulled off a cleverly balanced act that barely stumbled, even when Snowy White's guitar clapped out.

Phil Lynott looked like he was thoroughly enjoying his part as lovable rogue, bridging the gap between Errol Flynn and Harrison Ford with one giant stride. His tongue was waving wildly at the kids upfront for most of the time, but presumably it returned to stick firmly in his cheek when he added to their anthem: "The boys are back in town . . . get ya knickers down!"

After standing for hours in a soggy field listening to a ragbag of also rans, how many people do you think took the time to ponder whether this was innocent fun or unquestioned chauvinism? – IAN PYE

### NORTHERN CARNIVAL AGAINST THE MISSILES
### Alexandra Park, Manchester

sense, goodwill, and good entertainment.

Travelling to Alexandra Park made me feel nervous. Deep

various side-stalls and listening to some invigorating music.

First up were the Freshies,

She offered one to a young punk who apologetically admitted that he was full up, after eating two hot dogs. She

lost in the loudspeakers. And much of his performance was undercut with a surfeit of obscenities (particularly dur-

### ORANGE JUICE/BLUEBELLS
### The Venue, London